

**Board Report**

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**FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
MARCH 15, 2023****SUBJECT: ACCESS SERVICES - QUARTERLY UPDATE****ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE****RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on Access Services - ADA Paratransit.

ISSUE

This is a quarterly update on Access Services (Access).

BACKGROUND

Access is the Los Angeles County transit agency that provides paratransit services on behalf of Metro and 45 other fixed route operators, as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Eligibility for Access is based on a person's ability to utilize accessible fixed-route buses and trains in Los Angeles County; Access currently has 104,000 registered riders. Access' paratransit service is a next-day, shared-ride, curb-to-curb service with additional assistance available to qualified individuals. The service is operated by six contractors in the following regions: Eastern, Southern, West Central, Northern, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valley. Access provides service to customers traveling between locations within 3/4 of a mile of local bus routes and rail lines. Customers call Access service providers directly to make trip reservations or can book trips online.

DISCUSSION**Service Restoration**

- **Qualified drivers/key personnel:** Labor shortages continue to ease due to increased wages and social media marketing efforts, which have brought in 8 new hires in the last few months. In December 2022, Access' contractors added 87 new drivers (56 employee drivers, 23 taxi drivers, and 8 drivers from SilverRide, a new Transportation Network Company (TNC) service specializing in seniors' trips. At the end of December 2022, Access had 1,493 certified drivers, which was 81 drivers short of the target.

- **Continuing shortages of taxi subcontractor capacity:** Access continues to face challenges with taxicab shortages, with only 32 percent of Access' trips currently being serviced by taxicabs compared to 50 percent pre-pandemic. Access staff continues to engage with its contractors and the taxicab industry to determine what additional incentives could be used to attract additional taxi capacity. In addition, Access' Board recently approved a pilot project to allow Access' contractors to use TNCs, like Uber, or non-Access certified taxis, for a small portion of their daily trips. The proposed pilot concept would require riders to opt-in to the program via the Access website and give their consent to receive trips on TNCs or non-certified taxis. This pilot program will run for two years and be monitored every month.
- **Continuing shortages of replacement vehicles:** While supply chain issues continue to delay the procurement of accessible paratransit vehicles, 13 vehicles will be delivered by mid-March, with an additional 72 expected to be received by the end of the year. In addition, Access is currently testing a Ford Transit van prototype as an additional procurement option.

FY23 Operational Performance

Through December 2022, Access provided 1.4 million passenger trips. This is about 81 percent of the trips provided during the same pre-pandemic period in 2019.

Despite the challenges outlined above, particularly the shortage of taxicab operators, Access is meeting or is close to meeting its service standards for the fiscal year. On-time performance, while slightly below standard for the year, has improved over the prior year, and staff will be monitoring its contractors to meet standards.

Attachment A has the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) established to ensure equitable service levels are provided throughout all regions of Los Angeles County. For more detailed information on Access' overall system statistics by service region, please see Access' monthly Board Box report at http://accessla.org/about_us/publications.html.

Other Operational Initiatives - Update

Electric Paratransit Vehicle Pilot Program: Access has identified the large Ram ProMaster as the most suitable platform for conversion to an accessible electric vehicle. A prototype revenue passenger vehicle has been shipped for quality/safety testing, and Access staff anticipates it should be available to procure in June 2023.

Antelope Valley Operations and Maintenance Facility: One of the main goals of Access' recently adopted 2022-2026 Strategic Plan is the development of Access-owned or controlled paratransit operations and maintenance facilities. In November, the Access Board approved the purchase of land in Lancaster, CA for developing and constructing a paratransit operations and maintenance facility.

Other Community Initiatives - Update

Community Meeting: Access held a virtual community meeting on February 25 for its riders countywide to provide an update on operations and information technology. The meeting included a presentation about how to get involved with Access' Community Advisory Committee, and staff was present to answer riders' questions about the service.

Parents with Disabilities (PWD) Program: Access' PWD program hit a milestone in December 2022, recording its 10,000th trip since service began countywide. The PWD program was launched in August 2021 at the start of the school year to assist Access customers - who are also parents - get their children to and from school and related activities safely and on time.

FY23 Customer Survey: The digital survey was sent to all active Access customers in January 2023 and will be followed by telephone calls. The survey aims to gather more information about the different transportation options available to people with disabilities in Los Angeles County and how frequently they are used. The survey results will give Access better insight into customer transportation needs, identify transportation gaps, and assist Access in planning for future ridership demand. Results will be available in the summer of FY23.

Working with Community Partners: Access continues to consult on a variety of issues with its community and public agency partners, including its own Community Advisory Committee (CAC), the Aging and Disability Transportation Network (ADTN), the Los Angeles City and County Commissions on Disabilities (LACCOD), Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, and various Metro departments. The CAC, for example, has formed several subcommittees, assisted by Access staff, that are identifying improvements on how to educate riders about policies and procedures, as well as providing recommendations on changes to Access' policies.

EQUITY PLATFORM

By federal mandate, Access exclusively serves people with disabilities. Most recently, Access analyzed its service area map to determine the percentage of riders served in Equity Focus Communities (EFCs). From January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022, about 46.7 percent of all trips taken by 30,873 Access riders were picked up in EFCs. The previously mentioned FY23 customer survey will help Access better understand the transportation needs of its riders in EFCs and how it can better serve them by identifying transportation gaps.

Access is also analyzing the equity impacts of the recent fixed-route service changes, mainly from Metro's NextGen plan, on its service area. The ADA mandates that paratransit services must be provided up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from a fixed-route bus or rail line. Thus, paratransit service areas can grow or shrink based on the fixed-route footprint. Staff will present the impacts of fixed-route changes to its advisory committees and Board and determine next steps within the next few months.

On a semi-annual basis, Access conducts countywide community meetings to allow all customers and stakeholders to receive information about Access and ask staff direct questions about their service experience. Closed captioning, language translation services, braille, and large print

materials are available upon request to ensure that all customers throughout Los Angeles County can participate. The next community meeting is planned for February 25, 2023.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system

Goal 3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity

NEXT STEPS

Access is working on the following:

- Releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for its Eastern (San Gabriel Valley) service region
- Implementing Access' Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP), which will integrate the FTA's mandate of implementing Safety Management Systems within all transit operations
- Seeking grant funding for Access-owned operations and maintenance facilities and its electric vehicle pilot project
- Developing the FY24 budget request
- Reporting on Community Meetings and Customer Survey results

Moving forward the quarterly updates will be provided on a semi-annual basis.

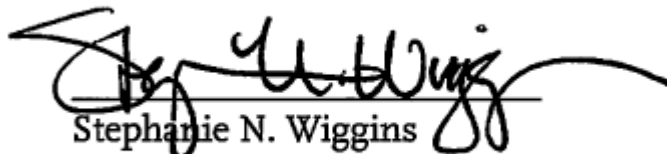
ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - Access Services Key Performance Indicators

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